JUNIUS UNVEILED

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"JUNIUS UNVEILED"

BY

JAMES SMITH

The most important secret of our times. The author of "Junius."—JOHN WILKES.

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The most important secret of our times. The author of *Junius.*—*John Wilkes.*

No one has yet seen the authentic features of Junius, and time, that for the most part discloses all things, has long failed in dissipating the obscurity which surrounds this.—*Rev. John Mitford.*

Even now the dark shadow of Junius looms across that period of our annals with a grandeur no doubt much enhanced and heightened by the mystery.—*Lord Mahon.*

It is almost impossible that means should not exist for removing the veil in which Junius has for nearly eighty years been shrouded.—*Sir Harris Nicholas.*

In the *Letters of Junius* invective and sarcasm rise into genius. The language is worthy of Tacitus, and English prose contains nothing more solid, more vigorous, or more truly classic than these.—*Histoire des Littératures Etrangères, par Alfred Bougeault.*

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INTRODUCTION

I RESERVE for a future edition of this book—should it ever be called for—an explanation of the somewhat remarkable circumstances under which the clue to the authorship of the *Letters of Junius* came into my possession.

Enough, for the present, to state that, holding the clue, I found the identification of the hitherto mysterious man in the mask comparatively easy. The further I proceeded in my investigations, the more rapidly did the evidence accumulate, and the more convincing did it become. Not only so, but "still the wonder grew" that no previous explorer of the literary and political history of the period in which these *Letters* were originally published should have made a happy guess at the writer of them; because, when once upon the *piste*, he could not have failed to run the crafty old fox to earth.

It is without the slightest feeling of self-gratulation that I venture to assert my belief that no dispassionate reader of the following pages can

fail to be struck, as I have been, by the number and perfect concordance of the proofs which confront us that

EDWARD GIBBON AND JUNIUS
WERE ONE AND THE SAME PERSON.

I take no particular credit for the discovery. Any tolerably well-read man, with the clue in his hands, could not avoid making it. Of all the distinguished writers of his epoch, Gibbon alone combined the literary power, manifested in these *Letters*, with the two special characteristics so prominently exhibited by the author of them. Other men like Burke, Wilkes, Johnson, and perhaps half a dozen more who might be named, were intellectually capable of producing these famous compositions, but not one of these had acquired the military experience, or the complete and critically accurate knowledge of the French language and of French literature, which Junius displayed. Nor would any other than himself have been likely to deal so leniently, not to say kindly, with John Wilkes as Gibbon did.

For these reasons it is quite unnecessary, I take it, to discuss the claims which have been put forward on behalf of Sir Philip Francis, Lord Ashburton, Lieut.-Col. Barré, Lord Charles Sackville,

and the Earl of Shelburne, to the putative authorship of these letters; or to compare them with those which are advanced on behalf of Gibbon in the following pages. These will speak for themselves; and on a careful scrutiny of each link in the chain of evidence which I have welded together, I have been unable to discover any trace of weakness; while any one, with the *Letters of Junius* and the *Autobiographies* and *Letters of Gibbon* before him, can test the strength and cohesion of the entire chain.

The workman who has hammered it out, link by link, is a really unimportant personage. He may be pleased with his good fortune in acquiring the clue; but he does not feel the slightest wish to perch himself upon a gate-post and crow over the discovery. He thinks he has solved what John Wilkes called "the most important secret of our times"; but he candidly acknowledges that the solution stared him in the face almost from the moment that the key to the problem came into his keeping. To have missed the opportunity of removing the mask which has so long hidden the features of Junius would have been to stand self-convicted of indolence or of ineptitude. For the proofs were already waiting to be seized upon and to be arranged and classified by whomsoever should be fortunate enough

to obtain the necessary clue. A little patience and a moderate amount of research were all that was required; and the results of their application to the present inquiry are set forth without any prolixity, it is hoped, in the following pages.

J. S.

"Amwell," Hawthorn, Victoria,
1907.

JUNIUS UNVEILED

CHAPTER I

CHRONOLOGICAL COINCIDENCES

THE first letter to which the signature of Junius is attached bears date, January 21, 1769, and the last was issued on the same day in 1772.

Where was Gibbon during this interval of time, and how was he occupied? This, as it appears to me, is the first point to be determined. As is well known, he was sent by his father, at the age of sixteen, to Lausanne, in Switzerland, with the view of bringing the young man—his only son—back to the Protestant faith, which he had somewhat hastily renounced, in the month of June in that year, in favour of Roman Catholicism. Recalled to England in April, 1758, he entered the Hampshire Militia and continued his connection with that force until 1763, when it was disbanded. Shortly afterwards he visited Paris on his way to Italy, spent upwards of eighteen weeks in Rome, where he conceived the idea of writing his great historical work, "as he sat musing amongst the ruins of the Capitol, while the bare-footed friars were singing vespers in the temple of Jupiter." He returned to England in June, 1765, and took

up his abode in his father's house at Putney, where he remained until the death of the elder Gibbon, in 1770; and during that summer, as he himself is careful to tell us, "he had no taste for study, and would have been ashamed if he had." This statement, as I shall proceed to show, is of considerable importance in connection with an otherwise inexplicable suspension of the *Letters of Junius* which took place at that very time.

Gibbon, it will be seen, was residing in one of the western suburbs of London during the whole of the year 1769, in which something like three-fourths of the acknowledged *Letters of Junius* were making their appearance in the *Public Advertiser*. But in the year following, the elder Gibbon, to whom his son was tenderly attached, nothwithstanding the old gentleman's failings, was seized with a fatal illness, of which he died on November 10, 1770. Now, is it not a noteworthy circumstance that during the first five months of that year Junius only wrote four letters in the *Public Advertiser*, then laid his pen aside for three months; resumed it to write a short epistle to Lord North on August 22 in the same year, and was once more silent until after the death of the elder Gibbon, which took place on the day above mentioned?

It must also be remarked as a significant

incident that Junius, in his private memorandum to Woodfall, accompanying the first of the six letters, written during the months of November and December, 1770, remarks: "The inclosed, though begun within these few days, has been greatly laboured." But why so? Is it straining conjecture too far to suppose that a suspension of literary composition from May 28 to November 14, with the solitary exception of a two-page letter to North, the diversion of Gibbon's thoughts into entirely different channels, the depression of mind occasioned by the lingering illness (from dropsy) and death of the only near relative he possessed, and the trouble and vexation entailed upon him by the sad muddle in which his father had left his worldly affairs, were the causes which made his resumption of public letter-writing so laborious to one who, under ordinary circumstances, could indite such fluent, facile, and forcible epistles?

To put the coincidence of dates, in this instance, as clearly and concisely as possible, I submit the following parallels:—

Junius	Gibbon
He ceased contributing to the *Public Advertiser*, with only one brief exception, from May 28 to November 14, 1770.	From the middle of June Gibbon was in attendance on his father, who had been seized with a mortal illness, of which he died, November 10, 1770.

Is not this an important piece of circumstantial evidence in favour of the identification of the writer of the *Letters of Junius* with the author of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire?* During the last illness of his father, Gibbon had little leisure and probably less inclination for the composition of those terrible Philippics which were so eagerly sought after by the newspaper readers and politicians of those days; and as the invalid's end grew near, his son, strong in his sense of filial duty, abstained entirely from the warfare which must have become a second nature to him.

When all was over, Gibbon was probably glad to divert his mind from brooding over the irreparable bereavement he had sustained by writing the letter to Lord Mansfield already referred to, which will be found to contain the following enigmatical allusion to the long interval during which Junius had maintained an almost unbroken silence: "I am considerably in your debt, and shall endeavour once for all to balance the account. Accept of this address, my lord, as a prologue to more important scenes in which you will probably be called upon to act or suffer. You will not question my veracity when I assure you that it has not been owing to any particular respect to your person that I have abstained from you so long."

Nor could the abstinence be accounted for by any lack of tempting subjects for animadversion and invective at the hands of a political censor. In fact, the six months between May and November had been pregnant with events, in connection with which the conduct of the chief justice was such as to challenge the severest reprobation on the part of such a critic as Junius, so that there must have been some pressing reason for his prolonged silence at this juncture. What, for example, could have been stronger than the provocation offered by that eminent functionary to his flagellator on July 5: that is to say, two days after Gibbon had written a letter to Mr. James Scott describing the critical condition of his father, who could neither eat nor sleep, and had become much worse during the previous ten days or a fortnight?

At the date mentioned, Lord Mansfield had delivered his extraordinary charge to the jury in the Court of King's Bench, in the case of Lord Grosvenor *versus* the Duke of Cumberland. This was an action for *crim. con.*, in which the damages were laid at £100,000; and the noble and learned judge, who presided at the trial, instructed the panel that they were to pay no regard to the quality or fortune of the parties in assessing the damages; that it was a trial between

A. and B.; that they were to consider the offence in a moral light only, and give no greater damages to a peer of the realm than to the meanest mechanic.

All London was ringing with this scandalous attempt of the Chief Justice of England to save a prince of the blood royal from paying a heavy pecuniary penalty for his licentious amours. Lord Mansfield was one of Junius' pet antipathies; and yet this heretofore prompt and expeditious scourge of public men allowed upwards of four months, or, to put it more exactly, 130 days, to pass by without bringing down the lash upon the shoulders of the great legal functionary whom he delighted to scarify, and who had done so much to invite reprobation by the discreditable *dictum* in the notorious case above referred to!

Contrast this singular delay with the fierce alacrity exhibited by Junius, all through the year 1769, in swooping down upon the objects of his animadversion, and where is the explanation of such obvious incongruity of conduct to be sought for? Is it not to be found in the identification of Junius with Gibbon, and in the fact that his duties as a public censor were necessarily suspended by the fatal illness of his father? And is it not a noteworthy fact, as well as a valuable bit

of collateral and corroborative evidence, that there was a break in the letters "ascribed to Junius," and bearing other signatures, from July 7, 1770, until November 19 in the same year, while one short private note of four lines was sent from Junius to Woodfall between March 18 and November 12, 1770; although, up to the first-named date, he had written two-and-twenty letters to him?

But, after the death and burial of the elder Gibbon, and after devoting ten or eleven weeks to winding up his affairs, which were left in a state of considerable embarrassment owing to "a general want of order and exactness" in the old gentleman's management of them, Junius-Gibbon resumes his old work with renewed vigour on January 30, 1771, and publishes as many as five-and-twenty letters, or very nearly one every fortnight, during the currency of that year; the literary activity of Junius, so far as it is capable of being authenticated, being represented by the following figures in the under-mentioned years:—

1769	54 letters
1770 (the year of the elder Gibbon's fatal illness)	6 letters
1771	25 letters

CHAPTER II

JUNIUS' KNOWLEDGE OF MILITARY AFFAIRS

It was remarked by Mr. Jaques, in his *Junius and his Works*, that it is "impossible for any person to peruse attentively this controversy without being convinced that the profound and accurate knowledge of military affairs displayed by Junius could only have been possessed by an old and experienced soldier; that it was by no means of such a superficial and amateur character as might have been gleaned by a clerk in the War Office, but bears indubitable marks of being the *result of that knowledge which is only to be acquired in the tented field* and amidst the actual turmoil and din of war." In support of his contention, the same writer quotes from the letters a collection of martial similes, indicating, on the part of Junius, a familiarity with military matters such as very few civilians possess.

Let us now see how these facts fit in with a striking episode in the life of Gibbon. On June 12, 1759, he and his father joined the Hampshire regiment of the National Militia, the former as captain, the latter as major. For two years and

a half, that is to say, from May 10, 1760, to December 23, 1762, both the Gibbons were condemned, as the younger tells us, "to a wandering life of military servitude." Upon the future historian devolved "the effective labour of dictating the orders and exercising the battalion." In the "first sallies of his enthusiasm," he says, "I had seriously attempted to embrace the regular profession of a soldier;" and while under arms, he acquired plenty of experience of life "in the tented field," for the greater part of those two years and a half in the militia were spent in encampments successively formed in the counties of Hants, Dorset, Wiltshire, and Kent. It proved to be a most valuable course of scientific training and of educational discipline for Gibbon, who was eventually "the real acting major of the battalion," which he brought to a high state of efficiency. "But what I value most," he writes in his *Journal*, "is the knowledge it has given me of mankind in general, and of my own country in particular. The general system of our government, the methods of our several offices, the departments and powers of their respective officers, our provincial and municipal administration, the views of our several parties, the characters, connections, and influence of our principal people, have been impressed on my mind, not by vain

theory, but by the indelible lessons of action and experience."

This was precisely the kind of knowledge which afterwards proved of the highest service to Gibbon when writing under the pseudonym of Junius; but it was of still greater value to him as a historian. This he acknowledges in the following passage of his *Memoirs:* "In this peaceful service I imbibed the rudiments of the language and science of tactics, which opened a new field of study and observation. I diligently read and meditated the *Memoires Militaires* of Quintus Icilius.[1] He was the only writer (says Gibbon) who united the merits of a professor and a veteran. The discipline and evolutions of a modern battalion gave me a clearer notion of the phalanx and the legion; and the captain of Hampshire Grenadiers (the reader may smile!) has not been useless to the historian of the Roman Empire."

[1] M. Guichardt, a writer, who, descended from French Protestant refugees, settled in Holland, served in the Dutch army, and had published some works on military tactics which attracted the attention of Frederick the Great, who offered him a staff appointment in the Prussian army and dubbed him Quintus Icilius, after Cæsar's best aide-de-camp. He brilliantly distinguished himself at the battle of Leipzig, and was promoted to the rank of Colonel. The last twelve years of his life were spent at Potsdam, where he was treated as a comrade by Frederick.

Therefore Gibbon, although not an old and experienced soldier, "had acquired by study, observation, and a mastery of the theory and practice of military art and tactics, the very kind of knowledge which has induced many of those who have essayed to unmask Junius to conclude that he must either have seen service in the field, or have been thoroughly familiar with the archives of the War Office.

CHAPTER III

JUNIUS AND WILKES

One of the minor mysteries connected with the authorship of the famous *Letters* has been this—the cause of the kindly feeling entertained by the writer of them for John Wilkes, as a public man, while he was neither ignorant of, nor indulgent towards, his private failings.

In the very first letter to the *Public Advertiser* Junius speaks of him in these terms: "Prudence and self-preparation will oblige the most moderate dispositions to make common cause even with a man whose conduct they censure, if they see him persecuted in a way which the real spirit of the laws will not justify." The allusion is, of course, to the proceedings taken against Wilkes, under a general warrant, for the publication of the famous forty-fifth number of the *North Briton*.

The private correspondence between Junius and Wilkes commenced on August 20, 1771, and was continued until January 15, 1772. In the opening letter, placed in the hands of Wilkes by a "chairman," Junius thus expressed himself: "I presume, sir, you are satisfied that I mean

you well, and that it is not necessary to assure you that while you adhere to the resolution of depending only upon the public favour (which, if you have half the understanding I attribute to you, you can never depart from), you may rely upon my utmost assistance; whatever imaginary views may be ascribed to the author, it must always make part of Junius' plan to support Mr. Wilkes while *he* makes common cause with the people." In a second letter to the popular tribune, about a fortnight later, Junius, criticising the resolutions arrived at by a meeting of the "Supporters of the Bill of Rights," held in the London Tavern, writes: "I do not deny that I expect my opinions upon these points should have some degree of weight with you. I have served Mr. Wilkes, and am still capable of serving him; I have faithfully served the public, without the possibility of a personal advantage. As Junius I can never expect to be rewarded, the secret is too important to be committed to any great man's discretion."

Eighteen letters in all passed between Junius and Wilkes during the five months covered by their correspondence; and, in one of these epistles, Wilkes asks his unknown friend whether he wishes "for any dinner or ball tickets for the Lord Mayor's day, for himself, or friend, or for a

favourite, or for *Junia?* The day will be worth observation. Whether *creta an carbone notandus*, I do not know, but the people, sir, the people are the sight. How happy should I be to see my Portia (his daughter, it is believed), here dance a graceful minuet with Junius Brutus; but Junius is inexorable and I submit, I would send your tickets to Woodfall." In replying to this invitation, four days later, Junius is betrayed into the unguarded use of a phrase which, I think, helps, in however small a degree, to identify the writer. "Many thanks," he says, "for your obliging offer; but alas! my age and *figure* would do but little credit to my partner."

The assumption of "age" (he was only thirty-four) was probably a pretext to excuse his absence, as also part of his general scheme of disguise; but may we not find a consciousness of his growing obesity underlying his mention of the unsuitability of his "figure" to grace a ball-room?

The attachment of Junius to Wilkes seems to have been based upon something stronger than political sympathies. He must have liked the man personally, as the following passages will serve to show: "I love the cause, independent of persons, and I wish well to Mr. Wilkes, independent of the cause;" "Continue careful of your

health. Your head is too useful to be spared, and your head may be wanted;" "Depend upon it, the perpetual union of *Wilkes and mob* does you no service. Not but that I love and esteem the mob. It is your interest to keep up dignity and gravity besides. I would not make myself cheap by walking so much in the streets as you do. *Verbum Sat.*"

In a letter to his stepmother, written in the afternoon of March 20, 1770, Gibbon, speaking of his occupation on the day previous, says: "I dined, went down to the House of Commons, stayed out a long debate, and was not in bed until four o'clock this morning." What was the question in debate? And why was Gibbon so much interested in it as to induce him to spend something like twelve hours in listening to it? The subject under discussion was the "Remonstrance" addressed by the corporation of the city of London to the king, praying for the dissolution of Parliament as not representing the people, and soliciting the removal of his "evil ministers." This action of the corporation had been provoked by the illegal rejection of Gibbon's old "chum," John Wilkes, after he had been elected for the fourth time to represent the county of Middlesex in the House of Commons. And is it not a significant fact that, on the morning of

the day upon which that debate occurred, Junius had written, or at any rate dated, a letter to the *Public Advertiser* extolling "the noble spirit of the metropolis" in drawing up such a remonstrance, vindicating its tone and substance, and denouncing the principle upon which the Middlesex election was determined as being "more pernicious in its effects than either the levying of ship-money by Charles the First, or the suspending power assumed by his son." Assuming the identity of Junius with Gibbon, the thirty-seventh letter of the former will fully explain the interest evidently felt by the latter in the debate which took place upon the subject in the House of Commons on the night of March 19, 1770.

Language like this is that of a friend, and not of a mere admirer of a prominent political personage sharing in the views of Junius, who even goes out of his way to signify his approval of the convivial habits of Wilkes, to whom he writes as follows, on September 18: "The domestic society you speak of[1] is much to be envied. I fancy I should like it still better than you do. I, too, am no enemy to good fellowship," etc.

[1] "I now live very much at home in the elegant society of a sensible daughter, whom Junius has noticed in the most obliging manner."—*Wilkes to Junius.*

The editor of the *Granville Papers*, in his endeavours to identify Junius with Lord Temple, appears to have been very much struck by the cordial relations subsisting between the masked writer of the *Letters* and the editor of the *North Briton*. "The letters from Junius to Wilkes," he observes, "show an intimate personal knowledge of his character, and the allusions to his daughter mark something more than a stranger's interest in him: 'I appeal to Miss Wilkes, whose judgment I hear highly commended. . . . Ask that amiable daughter whom you so implicitly confide in, is it possible that Junius should betray me?'" . . . In a letter to Mr. Horne also, Junius alludes to Miss Wilkes: "You say you are a *man*,—was it generous, was it manly, repeatedly to introduce into a newspaper the name of a young lady with whom you must heretofore have lived on terms of politeness and good humour?" It is evident that Junius appreciated the literary acquirements of Wilkes by his desiring Woodfall to submit to him the proof-sheets of the Dedication and Preface, and afterwards sending his thanks to Wilkes for what he had done and wishing he had done more.

The question now arises: Where, when, and how did Junius acquire that personal knowledge of Wilkes which he evidently possessed, and

what were the beginnings of their friendly relations? There is no reason to suppose that Wilkes even conjectured the origin of the partiality which Junius entertained for him; and he promised, indeed, to abstain from guessing at his identity; for the first letter he addressed to his unknown friend commenced thus: "I do not mean to indulge the impertinent curiosity of finding out the most important secret of our times, the author of *Junius;* I will not attempt with profane hands to tear the sacred veil of the sanctuary. I am disposed, with the inhabitants of Attica, to erect *an altar to the unknown god* of our political idolatry, and will be content to worship him in clouds and darkness."

But if Gibbon was the writer of these *Letters*, the difficulty of accounting for the friendship of Junius for Wilkes disappears in an instant. They had been old comrades and boon companions; they had met at the same mess-table, and Gibbon had been delighted with the irrepressible gaiety, fun, sparkle, engaging manners, and fascinating conversation of "one of the most agreeable rakes about town," as Macaulay called him. And therefore the captain of the Hampshire Grenadiers jots down in his *Journal*, on September 23, 1762, the following entry concerning his jovial friend: "Colonel Wilkes, of the

Buckinghamshire militia, dined with us, and renewed the acquaintance Sir Thomas and myself had begun with him at Reading. I scarcely ever met with a better companion. He has inexhaustible spirits, infinite wit and humour, and a great deal of knowledge. He told us, himself, that in this time of public discussion, he was resolved to make his fortune. Upon this principle he had connected himself closely with Lord Temple and Mr. Pitt; commenced a public adversary to Lord Bute, whom he abuses weekly in the *North Briton* and other political papers in which he is concerned. This proved a very debauched day. We drank a good deal both after dinner and supper; and when at last Wilkes had retired, Sir Thomas and some others (of whom I was one) broke into his room and made him drink a bottle of claret in bed."

Robert Burns, in order to explain why it was that Tam O'Shanter loved Souter Johnny "like a vera brither," reminds us that "they had been fou for weeks thegither"; and it does not require a very extensive experience of human life to know that a good many strong and lasting friendships are formed by men in moments of conviviality. This was probably the case with Wilkes and Gibbon, who resembled each other

in their fondness for good wine, while their characters and temperaments presented just those points of dissimilarity and contrast which are so often to be observed in men who are mutually drawn towards each other. Gibbon, with his phlegmatic nature, studious habits, and serious disposition, would be charmed and exhilarated by Wilkes's buoyancy of spirits, his ready wit, his flow of anecdote, his licentious stories—for these were then *à la mode*—his extreme good humour and his irrepressible vivacity, especially as these agreeable qualities were associated with a well-furnished mind, enriched by extensive reading, and by that shrewd observation of contemporary men and manners with which Wilkes has been credited by those who knew him best. On the particular occasion above referred to, whether by chance or design, he seems to have laid himself out to shine at the dinner and supper table as the joyous and entertaining guest, and he evidently succeeded. But in so doing he conquered more than the laughter and approbation of his host. He was unconsciously securing the future support of a pen far more influential in the world of English politics than his own.

CHAPTER IV

JUNIUS AND GARRICK

JUNIUS was nervously apprehensive lest his secret should be penetrated by Garrick. In the elaborate essay on the "History and Discovery of Junius" prefixed to the second volume of the collective edition of his letters, its editor, Mr. John Wade, says: "There is reason to believe that Junius was known to Garrick. He expresses himself much alarmed by the exaggerated impression he had formed of the pryings of the latter, and was afraid lest Woodfall might have told him where the letters were sent, which he desired him to change. He writes a note to be sent to Garrick, with the view of intimidating him and to prevent him from meddling and endeavouring to trace the secret; and he desires Woodfall to copy it with his own hand. Such extreme nervousness, bordering on terror, is easily accounted for, supposing Junius and Francis to be identical. Dr. Francis was on intimate terms with Garrick and dedicated his play of *Eugenia* to him." But this dedication rendered it all the more improbable that he was

the writer of the insulting letter which Junius addressed to the great actor on November 10, 1771. A copy of it is here subjoined:—

"I am very exactly informed of your impertinent inquiries (made of Woodfall), and of the information you so busily sent to Richmond (*i.e.* to one of the king's pages, stating that Junius would write no more), and with what triumph and exultation it was received. I knew every particular of it the *next day*. Now, mark me, vagabond. Keep to your pantomimes, or be assured you shall hear of it. Meddle no more, thou busy informer! It is in *my* power to make you curse the hour in which you dared to interfere with *Junius*."

This letter was sent to Woodfall with the request, as I have said, that he would have it copied and posted; and with instructions also to substitute the word "practices" for "impertinent inquiries." But the dread of discovery seemed to grow upon Junius just about this time, for he tells Woodfall that he should not survive such a misfortune three days; or, if he did, they would attaint him by bill. Therefore, he adds, "Change to the Somerset Coffee House, and let no mortal know the alteration. I am persuaded you are too honest a man to contribute in any way to my *destruction*. Act

honourably by me, and at a proper time you shall know me."

Up to this time, letters and parcels intended for Junius had been left at the New Exchange Coffee House or addressed to "Mr. John Fretley," to "Mr. William Middleton," and for these Junius seems to have generally called himself. Now this coffee-house stood on the south side of the Strand, between Durham Yard and Adam Street. But Garrick, who had previously lived in Southampton Street on the west side, was about to move to No. 5 Adelphi Terrace, recently erected by the brothers Adams, and as his way from the old house to the new would lie past the door of the Exchange Coffee House, Junius perceived there was a risk of his being seen and recognised by the actor; and therefore he changed the dépôt of his letters and parcels to the Somerset Coffee House, which was about a quarter of a mile to the eastward. And when Garrick was finally settled in his new abode, Junius changed his receiving house to the bar of Munday's Coffee House, Maiden Lane.

The writer of the *Letters* was personally so well known to Garrick as to cause the former to adopt extraordinary precautions lest he should be accidentally seen in the neighbourhood of Woodfall's printing office, and thus arouse suspicions

in the mind of the actor. How does this accord with the facts of Gibbon's life? For at least nine years he had been on friendly terms with the great actor, who was, if I mistake not, a member of the Cocoa Tree Club, like himself, and on November 26, 1762, Gibbon makes the following entry in his *Journal:* "I went with Mallet to breakfast with Garrick, and thence to Drury Lane House, where I assisted at a very private rehearsal in the green room of a new tragedy of Mallet's called *Elvira*."

This, then, seems to have been the position of affairs. Garrick, as part proprietor of the *Public Advertiser*, and as a *persona grata* in court circles, was always fishing for such information, both inside and outside the office, as might lead to the detection of who Junius really was, knowing how acceptable this would be to his royal patron. Gibbon became seriously alarmed, and wrote to Garrick the threatening letter cited above. Having done so, and having in a moment of irritation stigmatised as a "vagabond" the friend of whose hospitality he had partaken, he would naturally be more anxious than ever to maintain his anonymity, and to screen himself more especially from the reproach of having insulted a gentleman who had certainly given him very inadequate provocation.

CHAPTER V

JUNIUS' KNOWLEDGE OF FRENCH

It is more than astonishing, it is simply astounding that with such a clue in their hands as was supplied by Junius' remarkable knowledge of the French language and of French literature, recent investigators of "the most important secret of our times" should have missed the discovery of the man behind the mask.

John Britton, in his *Junius Elucidated*, was so much struck by this circumstance at a time when such an "accomplishment was comparatively rare," that he put it forward as a strong point in favour of Colonel Barré having written the *Letters*, because the colonel was the son of a French emigrant and understood the language very well.

"Not only," writes Britton, "was Junius acquainted with that language as a scholar, but he was equally well versed in its idioms, and even in its nicknames. He satirically calls one of his antagonists a *maquereau*;[1] and Barrington is made to describe Chamier in the words, "*Sire*,

[1] A go-between, pander, or pimp. Le Duchat supposes the word to be a corruption of *Mercureau*, or little Mercury.

il s'appelle Ragosin"[1] (one of Scarron's heroes). "Taking the *pas*," "*mauvais honte*," and similar phrases, were not at that time familiarly used in Great Britain. Gibbon criticises gravely Lord Rochford's diplomatic French, pointing out that "in three lines there are no less than seven false concords," and several other instances might be referred to if necessary. Heron, in his preface to Pinkerton's edition of *Junius*, remarks: "It is easy to perceive that Junius has added to the study of the ancient classics that also of the best French writers. Montesquieu, whose style and manner of composition had been, for about five-and-twenty years before Junius wrote, highly popular in England, had undoubtedly been, in a very particular manner, the subject of his study. And it is evident that he was no stranger to the art of Voltaire, nor always averse from imitating it."

In his preface to the collective edition of his writings, Junius translated from De Lolme's *Constitution de l'Angleterre*—a book not yet rendered into English[2]—a passage as idiomatic in form as the original. He quotes Montesquieu

[1] A misprint for Ragotin, in "Veteran's" second letter to Lord Barrington who had appointed Chamier deputy secretary at war. The offensive epithet, or comparison, appears to have been wholly inapplicable.

[2] Not until 1775.

in French as a footnote to his eighth letter, addressed to the Duke of Grafton; as also Corneille in the original when writing to the Right Hon. Edward Westorn; and he indicates his acquaintance with what may be called the by-ways of French literature when he recommends Sir William Draper to look into Torcy's *Memoirs*. It would be interesting to inquire how many people in England had ever heard of such a book, written by the eldest son of the illustrious Colbert, who was much better known as the Marquis de Seignelay.

Again, there are so many Gallicisms—so many phrases in Junius' *Letters* denoting that the writer of them was in the habit of thinking in French—that Dr. Busby actually made these the basis of an argument to show that these *Letters* were the work of De Lolme. And Lord Brougham, when speaking of "the polished style" of Junius, asserts that it was "far from being good, pure English."

Now, at that time, when the study of continental languages was very much more restricted than it is at present, it would be scarcely an exaggeration to assert that Gibbon was the only Englishman of any note possessing the requisite literary qualifications to write the *Letters of Junius* who was at the same time a thorough

master of the French language and of French literature. And it would be perfectly safe to say that he was the one Englishman of his period who was accustomed to *think* in French, and who was competent to speak and write that idiom with the same facility and fluency with which he could converse and compose in his mother tongue. It is only necessary to turn to his *Memoirs* in order to find abundant proofs of this.

In the first place, Gibbon spent nearly five years in the house of Mr. Pavillard, a Protestant pastor, at Lausanne, in the Pays de Vaud, where, he tells us, "the French language is used with less imperfection than in most of the distant provinces of France." Surrounded by none but those who spoke that tongue, he acquired it so rapidly as to astonish himself. "My pronunciation was formed," he says, "by the constant repetition of the same sounds; the variety of words and idioms, the rules of grammar, and distinctions of genders, were impressed in my memory; ease and freedom were obtained by practice; correctness and elegance by labour; and, before I was called home, *French, in which I spontaneously thought, was more familiar than English to my ear, my tongue, and my pen.*" No wonder that Brougham impugned the purity of Junius' English, and that Busby concluded

that his letters must have been written by a Frenchman!

In his *Journal* Gibbon states that, by the end of 1755, he had made himself complete master of the French and Latin languages, and enumerates the books which he had read in each. He used to amuse himself by translating an epistle of Cicero into French, and having laid it aside for a time, until he had forgotten the phraseology, he would translate it back again into Latin. His abstracts of books in the latter language were always written in French; and between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one, his opinions, habits, and sentiments had been so exclusively "cast in a foreign mould" that he "had ceased to be an Englishman." His first literary composition, an *Essai sur L'Etude de la Litterature* was, as its title indicates, written in French; he learned to manage the weapon of grave and temperate irony by the annual study of the *Lettres Provinciales* of Pascal; and when he went to Paris he was "received as a countryman" by his French friends.

At the same time, Gibbon makes a statement full of significance in connection with the claims which have been put forward on behalf of such of his contemporaries as have been suspected of the authorship of the *Letters of Junius*. He has been speaking, in his *Memoirs*, of "several

foreigners who have seized the opportunity of speaking to Europe in this common dialect, *i.e.*, French, which had become, as he reminds us, "the familiar language of my conversation and studies, in which it is easier for me to write than in my mother tongue," and he proceeds to observe: "The just pride and laudable prejudice of England has (*sic*) restrained this communication of idioms; and of all the nations on this side of the Alps my countrymen are the least practised and least perfect in the exercise of the French tongue. By Sir William Temple and Lord Chesterfield it was only used on occasions of civility and business, and their printed letters will not be quoted as models of composition. Lord Bolingbroke may have published in French a sketch of his *Reflections on Exile*, but his reputation now reposes on the address of Voltaire, *Docte sermones utriusque linguae*. . . . The exception of Count Hamilton cannot fairly be urged. Though an Irishman by birth, he was educated in France from his childhood. . . . I might, therefore, assume the *primus ego in patriam*, etc., but with what success I have explored *this untrodden path* must be left to the decision of my French readers."

An Englishman who could thus venture to speak of himself as the first of his countrymen

who was qualified to speak and write French with greater facility than he spoke and wrote his mother tongue, and who confidently challenged the judgment of French critics upon a work written in their own language, was, I submit, the only man in the United Kingdom against whom such allegations as those of Busby and Brougham could justly lie. Gibbon was not only a proficient in French, but was capable of criticising the defects of even French writers and speakers. Thus he makes the following entries in his *Journal* on August 22, 1762: "I went with Ballard to the French church, where I heard a most indifferent sermon preached by Mr. ——. A very bad style, a worse pronunciation and action, and a very great vacuity of ideas, composed this excellent performance." In the year following Gibbon commenced writing his *Journal* in French, and thoroughly idiomatic French it proves to be upon examination.

At a dinner party at the house of his old friend M. de Foncemange in Paris, where the conversation was carried on exclusively in French as a matter of course, the chief topic of discussion was history, branching off into a controversy upon the best form of government, Gibbon found his views opposed by the Abbé de Mably. Some one who was present on the occasion has left a

record of what took place in a *Supplement de la Manière d'écrire l'Histoire,* in which he says: "Mr. Gibbon, being endowed with an excellent memory, and having all the facts present in his mind, very soon *dominated the conversation.*" But, in order to do this, it is evident that he must have had a perfect command of the language in which he was arguing, as well as a mastery of the subject in debate. His opponent, moreover, was a man of great erudition, who had been virtually Minister of Foreign Affairs in France, and a highly influential and successful diplomatist. He had written works on history, jurisprudence, and moral philosophy. He divined the approach of the French Revolution a decade before it occurred, and he anticipated the more enlightened views of modern socialism. Pitted against such an antagonist, and speaking the language of his opponent, Gibbon's knowledge of a foreign tongue must have been something altogether exceptional in order to enable him to "dominate" the conversation at a gathering of some of the most intellectual people in Paris.

His accent was also so pure and perfect that, in the year 1758, when France was closed to English travellers, Gibbon felt no hesitation in crossing that country *en route* for England, under an assumed name, and in borrowed regimentals,

accompanied by two Swiss officers of his acquaintance. Mr. J. C. Morison, in his biography of Gibbon, also comments on the fact that a letter of his, "written in fluent and perfect French," to George Deyverdun at Lausanne, "is one of the best that we have of Gibbon."

"Gibbon," observes a writer in the *Quarterly Review*, Vol. L., "was indeed half a Frenchman; . . . the merits and defects of his manner of composition were essentially French." M. Suard also tells us that "French was at least as familiar to Gibbon as English." Mme. Deffand, in one of her letters to Horace Walpole, writes: "It is constantly on the tip of my tongue to say to him (Gibbon), Don't put yourself to so much trouble (to acquire *les agréments*); for you deserve the honour of being a Frenchman." Macaulay, in his *Essay on Madame d'Arblay*, observes that "during a shorter exile (than Ovid's) Gibbon unlearned his native English"; and Sainte-Beuve remarks that "he spoke French like a book."

Nor will it be forgotten that Gibbon wrote a state paper in French by request of the Lord Chancellor and the Foreign Minister of the day, which was sent to the various courts of Europe, and was praised for its style and manner by so good a judge as Beaumarchais.

If I may appear to have striven to make this link in the chain of evidence stronger and thicker than the rest, it is because I believe it to be almost conclusive in itself; serving, as it does, to establish these propositions:—

1. That Junius was so completely master of the French language that one critic believed him to be a Frenchman; while a second assumed him to be the son of a French emigrant; a third complained that his style was not pure English; and a fourth (Dr. Parr) censured his Gallicisms.

2. That Gibbon was most probably the only Englishman of letters of his time who was so thoroughly conversant with the French tongue that it was more familiar than his own to his ear, tongue, and pen, who habitually thought in French, and preferred it to English when making entries in his own private journal and when writing out abstracts of the Latin authors he read.

3. That these facts alone—taking into consideration that Gibbon was one of about half a dozen men of his period possessing the literary qualifications necessary in the writer of such letters—constitute the most powerful piece of evidence that could be adduced in favour of Junius and Gibbon having been one and the same person.

In his *Memoirs*, about the year 1759, Gibbon says: "The favourite companions of my leisure were our English writers since the Revolution; they breathe the spirit of reason and liberty; and they most seasonably contributed to restore the purity of my language, *which had been corrupted by the long use of a foreign idiom.*"

CHAPTER VI

JUNIUS' CLASSICAL AND GENERAL ATTAINMENTS

DR. GOOD, in his preliminary essay on Junius and his writings prefixed to the collective edition of his *Letters*, remarks "that he was not only a man of highly cultivated general talents and education, but that he had critically and successfully studied the language, the law, the constitution, and the history of his native country, is indubitable."

It has already been shown that Gibbon gratefully referred to the impulse he had received, during his brief military career, towards the study of the British constitution, the municipal institutions of the country, its party government, and the administration of its public affairs. How thoroughly he had mastered its history will be evident from the fact that, in the year 1761, he had contemplated writing an historical essay on one of the following subjects: The Crusade of Richard the First; the Barons' Wars against John and Henry the Third; the History of Edward the Black Prince; the lives of, and a parallel between, Henry the Fifth and the

Emperor Titus; the life of Sir Philip Sydney; the life of the Marquis of Montrose; and a narrative of the career of Sir Walter Raleigh. Now Gibbon was not the man to undertake any work of this kind without having first of all made himself master of all the fundamental facts; and when he began to think seriously of illustrating the life and times of the founder of Virginia, he prepared the way by reading the following works: the *Bacon Papers*, in two volumes quarto; Naunton's *Fragmenta Regalia;* the political treatises and letters of Bacon, as well as his *Life* by Mallet; Monson's *Naval Tracts*, and Oldys' *Life of Sir Walter Raleigh*. Gibbon's own diffidence and timidity restrained him from carrying out his project, and thus deprived English literature of another masterpiece. But his studies for this and other literary projects which perished in embryo are quite sufficient to show that he had "critically and successfully studied the language, the law, the history, and constitution of his native country."[1]

Quotations from Latin authors occur much less frequently in the *Letters of Junius* than in those bearing other signatures, which are

[1] In the year 1767, Gibbon contributed to the *Memoires Littéraires de Grande Bretagne*, a review, in French, of Lord Lyttelton's *History of Henry II.*

commonly, although in some instances erroneously, attributed to him. In his twenty-fifth letter, which is addressed to Sir William Draper, he cites from Tacitus a sentence in which that stern historian describes Tiberius as "nursing his wrath to keep it warm"; and he prefixes to the same epistle the familiar *Haeret lateri lethalis arundo* of Virgil. From the same poet he quotes the phrase beginning *Quis talia fando*, and he concludes a letter to Woodfall, on March 5, 1772, with a Latin sentence, apparently composed *ad rem*. The miscellaneous letters ascribed to Junius contain passages from Livy, Tacitus, Virgil, Cicero, Quintilian, and Horace; but it is almost impossible to determine how much or how little of this correspondence was really written by "the mighty boar of the forest," as Burke denominated the mysterious contributor to the *Public Advertiser*.

That the genuine *Letters* were written by one who was familiar with the Latin classics will scarcely be disputed, and Gibbon's attainments in this respect are too well known to render any detailed statement of them necessary. He has told us of the very books he read and re-read, and has indicated those authors for whom he entertained a preference; while he has not omitted to mention his "third perusal of Terence,

Virgil, Horace, Tacitus, etc." In addition to which, he maintained a Latin correspondence with Professor Crevier,[1] of the University of Paris, with Professor Breitinger[2] of Zurich, and with Professor Matthew Gesner,[3] of the University of Gottingen.

It may not be wholly irrelevant to point out in this place a passage in Junius' letter to Lord Mansfield (November 14, 1770), which might well drop from the pen of a man who was already preparing for the first volume of his *Decline and Fall.* It is this: "No learned man, even among your own tribe, thinks you qualified to preside in a court of common law; yet it is confessed that *under Justinian you might have made an incomparable Prætor.*"

[1] Crevier was the continuator of Rollin's *Roman History*, and author of an able treatise on French rhetoric, in two volumes, of a *History of the University of Paris*, and of several other works, which have since become obsolete.

[2] Breitinger filled the chairs of Greek and Hebrew in the university of his native city, produced a new version of the *Septuagint*, wrote the *Ars cogitandi principia*, and several critical treatises on poetry and linguistics.

[3] Gesner was one of the greatest scholars of his century; he knew most of the Oriental languages, and was as much at home in Hebrew as in German, his native tongue. His learning was simply prodigious; his industry was untiring; his thirst for knowledge insatiable; and although he lived to be seventy years old, the amount of intellectual activity which he compressed into that period is really marvellous.

CHAPTER VII

STRUCTURE AND STYLE OF THE ENGLISH OF JUNIUS AND GIBBON

Dr. J. A. Weisse, in his *Origin, Progress, and Destiny of the English Language and Literature*, has analysed a passage from Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, and shows that, out of 183 common words, it contains 109 particles. I have taken at random a portion of one of Junius' letters to Sir William Draper, comprising 198 words, and have ascertained that it embraces 113 particles; so that a like proportion is observable in both instances. Then again, the late Professor G. P. Marsh, in his well-known *Lectures on the English Language*, after dissecting the seventh chapter of the first volume of the historian's great work, asserts that seventy per cent. of his vocabulary was composed of Anglo-Saxon, and thirty per cent. of other words. In analysing some of the *Letters of Junius*, I have found these ratios are pretty evenly maintained throughout.

Out of 100 different words—excluding repetitions—which occur in the passage from the *Decline and Fall* quoted by Dr. Weisse and re-

ferred to above, he enumerates no less than forty-two which are of French origin, and a careful examination of the *Letters of Junius* will disclose, I believe, almost identical results; but this is a branch of the inquiry which I have not pursued with the patience and pertinacity which it demands, owing to other and more pressing claims upon my time.

Of the very close resemblance which is traceable between the literary style of Gibbon and that of Junius, it is possible to speak with much greater confidence, because it is attested by the evidence of witnesses of high character and standing, not one of whom suspected the identity of the historian with the political gladiator.

But a preliminary word must be said with respect to the tone of the *Letters*. Could compositions so full of invective, bitterness, and sarcasm have been penned by a writer who is generally regarded as having been somewhat placid by nature and phlegmatic by temperament? If Gibbon was a man of this stamp, why did Boswell class him among "infidel wasps and *venomous* insects?" And why did the historian attack Warburton with so much acerbity as to call forth a rebuke from Professor Heyne: "*Paullo acrius quam velis . . . perstrinxit?*" And why should the poet Hayley have considered

it necessary to attempt to justify Gibbon's "*acrimony of style*" when flagellating the author of the *Divine Legation of Moses*, on account of Warburton's egregious mistakes with respect to the sixth book of the *Æneid?* In his cooler moments Gibbon regretted his own vehemence and arrogance, and made this honourable acknowledgment: "I cannot forgive myself the contemptuous treatment of a man who, with all his faults, was entitled to my esteem, and I can less forgive, in a personal attack, the cowardly concealment of my name and character." In a controversy upon a mere question of scholarship, there was no necessity for this concealment, but later on, when the *Letters of Junius* came to be written, the author of them would have been rash and foolhardy in the extreme to have braved persecution, at the hands of an indignant and powerful government, by revealing the source from which those fierce attacks upon men in high places emanated. Nor must we shut our eyes to the fact that Gibbon's skill as a literary combatant was recognised and eulogised by Horace Walpole, some years later, when the famous *Vindication* made its appearance. Writing to thank Gibbon for an early copy of it, Walpole said: "The penetration, solidity, and taste that made you the first of historians, dear sir, prevent

my being surprised at your being *the best writer of controversial pamphlets too.*" If he had previously written the *Letters of Junius*, Gibbon had certainly had a splendid training for the arena of controversy in which he so manifestly excelled.

But, at a still earlier date, as Mr. J. C. Morison has pointed out, in his monograph on the historian of the *Decline and Fall*, when Gibbon fell upon Warburton, "he sought controversy for its own sake, and became a polemic—shall we say—out of gaiety or bitterness of heart?"

The fondness which Junius exhibits for epithets of contumely in his *Letters* will be hereafter referred to.

Some Points of Resemblance

Has not this passage from the letter of Junius to the king, dated December 19, 1769, the true Gibbonian ring?—"The prætorian bands, enervated and debauched as they were, had still strength enough to save the Roman populace; but when the distant legions took the alarm, they marched to Rome and gave away the Empire." Compare this with the following paragraph from Chapter V. of the *Decline and Fall:* "In the luxurious idleness of an opulent city, their pride was nourished by the sense of their irresistible

weight; nor was it possible to conceal from them that the person of the sovereign, the authority of the senate, the public treasure, and the seat of empire, were all in their hands" (*i.e.* of the prætorian bands). At this very time Gibbon was, to use his own words, "collecting the substance of his Roman decay."

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"We know, if indeed we know or are to believe anything about Junius, that he was a careful and laborious writer. He says distinctly to Sampson Woodfall more than once, 'I weigh every word'—'the enclosed has been greatly laboured.' In a private letter to Wilkes he thus writes: 'The pains I took with that paper on privilege were greater than I can express to you.' . . . Again, in November, 1771, 'I am overcome with the slavery of writing.' In his letter to Horne Tooke he says: 'Is there no labour in the composition of these letters? Mr. Horne, I fear, is partial to me, and measures the facility of my writings by the fluency of his own.'"

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"I was often tempted to cast away the labour of seven years (while writing the first volume of the *Decline and Fall*). The style of an author should be the image of his mind, but the choice and command of language is the fruit of exercise. . . . Three times did I compose the first chapter; and three the second and third, before I was tolerably satisfied with their effect. . . . The fifteenth and sixteenth chapters have been reduced, by three successive revisals, from a large volume to their present size." — *Memoirs of Edward Gibbon, Written by Himself.*

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"Junius, indeed, never failed to recur to his labours, and when he took leave for ever in his Dedication he thus wrote: 'If an honest, and I may truly affirm a laborious, zeal for the public service has given me any weight in your esteem;' and the public whom he addressed could know anything of his labours except and so far as they were manifest in his letters."—*Papers of a Critic*, by C. W. Dilke, vol. ii. pp. 10 and 11.

"We hold it to be quite absurd to suppose that this celebrated writer came before the public perfect at his literary birth,—unequalled in spirit, in vigour, in intellectual energy, in sarcasm, in condensed power, in direct cleaving strength,—with a mind full-grown and fully developed, and a style so admirably adapted to its purpose that, though unexampled at the time, it became at once, and has ever since been considered a model in its way."—*Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 140.

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In his introduction to a new edition of the *Decline and Fall*, Professor J. B. Bury quotes several passages from the first, which Gibbon altered in the second edition, and points out that these were effected solely and wholly for the purpose of "improving the turn of a sentence, re-arranging the dactyls, or securing greater meaning of expression."

"The minuteness and comprehensiveness of Gibbon's historical knowledge are somewhat appalling to the scholarship of the present day; for twenty-two years (and therefore for thirteen years before the appearance of the first letter of Junius), Gibbon was a prodigy of steady virtuous application. His investigations extended over almost the whole range of intellectual activity for nearly fifteen hundred years."—*A Manual of Historical Literature*, by Professor C. K. Adams, p. 138.

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"If he makes his phrases concise, and selects his epithets, it is not from a love of style but in order the better to stamp his insult. Oratorical artifices in his hand became instru-

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"How he could traverse such acres of ill-written histories, even to collect such a great work, astonishes me." Horace Walpole, *Letter* 2458.

"He wrote his history, with a mind impregnated and saturated with every kind of antiquarian knowledge."—*Quarterly Review*, vol. l.

"The immensity of his researches, the variety of his knowledge, and his justness of mind."—Guizot.

"The first chapter has been composed *de nouveau* three times, the second twice, and all the others have undergone reviews, corrections, etc. . . . The ecclesiastical part, for instance, is written out in fourteen sheets, which I mean to *refondre* from beginning to end."—Letter to Holroyd, August 1, 1775.

"From the *Provincial Letters* of Pascal, which almost every year I have perused with new pleasure, I learned to manage the weapon of grave and temperate irony, even on

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ments of torture, and when he files his periods, it is to drive the knife deeper and surer. With what corrosive and burning irony, applied to the most secret corners of private life; with what inexorable persistence of calculated and meditated persecution, the quotations alone will show."—Taine's *History of English Literature*, book iii. chap. 3.

"The distinguishing features of his style are ardour, spirit, perspicacity, classical correctness, sententious epigrammatic compression; his characteristic ornaments keen, indignant invective, audacious interrogation, shrewd, severe antithetic retort, proud presumptuous disdain of the powers of his adversary; pointed and appropriate allusions that can never be mistaken. . . . Similes introduced not for the purpose of decoration, but of illustration and energy, brilliant, burning, admirably selected and irresistible in their application."—*Preliminary Essay on Junius and his*

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subjects of ecclesiastical solemnity." — *Memoirs of Edward Gibbon, ut supra.*

"The man of letters admires the fine edge of subtle sarcasm, wielded by Gibbon with such skill and effect." — Professor J. B. Bury.

"Irony, restrained causticity, comprehensive penetration . . . these are qualities, some of which border on defects."—*Causeries de Lundi*, "Gibbon," par Sainte-Beuve.

"My character is proud, violent, and disagreeable in Society."—*Memoirs.*

"It seems to me that, by a philosophical prejudice, he casts a cold and cruel derision upon men who, after all, had done no other wrong and committed no other crime than that of dying for their belief, and of not sacrificing their faith to save their lives."—*Histoire des Littérateurs Etrangères*, par A. Bougeault, vol. ii. p. 180.

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Writings, by Dr. John Mason Good.

"It is impossible to detract from the merits of these Letters. They are suited to their purpose and perfect in their kind . . . whether right or wrong, they are always shrewd . . . epigrammatic and antithetical to excess."—Coleridge.

"Junius was a most skilful master of the weapons he delighted to use. He was a gladiator of the first order, and his long series of attacks were made with consummate dexterity and boldness. In his own line he has never been equalled."—The Rev. John Mitford.

"He addressed himself to the powerful passions of our nature, captivated attention by rancorous abuse, sarcastic invective, and ferocious personalities; yet disguised them so well by the purity of his language, and the grace of his style, that, while we relish the pungency we do not taste the grossness."—*History of Party*, by E. W. Cooke, vol. iii. p. 189.

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"If an august and grandiose idea presides over the inspiration of Gibbon, the epigrammatic intention is close by."—*Causeries de Lundi*, par Sainte-Beuve, *ut supra*.

"Gibbon, in fact, is unanswerable by the ordinary arts of controversy."—*Quarterly Review*, vol. l.

"Gibbon's powers as a controversialist were first displayed in his polemic against Warburton, which Mr. J. Cotter Morison, in his biography of the historian, characterises as clear, trenchant and direct to a fault. It is indeed far less critical than polemical, and shows no trace of lofty calm, either moral or intellectual. We are not repelled much by his eagerness to refute and maltreat his opponent. This was not alien from the usages of the time."

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"His terseness and perspicuity of statement, his terrible energy of invective, the force and fire with which he pleads any political opinion, the poised and graceful structure of his sentences, and, above all, the elaborate polish of his sarcasms, can never be denied."—*History of England*, by Lord Mahon, vol. v. p. 217.

"It is impossible not to perceive the studied elegance of his style. . . . Movement, force, and nerve are qualities precious and rare in an improvisatore (!) With him the art is visible, the labour manifest, but his vivacity does not suffer from it; if the effect is strained after, it is attained." — W. de Remusat.

"Though he advances with the largest strides, his steps are measured. His expressions are selected with the most anxious care and his periods terminated in harmonious cadence. Thus he captivates by his confidence, by the turn of his sentences, and the flow of his words."

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"The public admired the extent and accuracy of his reading, the stately march of his sentences, the lucid order of his narrative."—*History of England*, by Lord Mahon, vol. vi. p. 307.

"Elegance, lucidity, and clearness, became his habitual merits."—Sainte-Beuve, *ut supra*.

"His narrative, after the first volume, marches with the steady and measured tramp of the Roman Legion." — *Gibbon*, in the English Men of Letters series, by J. C. Morison, p. 116.

"The descriptive richness of his style makes both manners and local scenery live before the imagination; and its energy deeply impresses his more sententious truths upon the memory."—*Dictionnaire Encyclopédique de Larousse*, vol. ix. p. 1111.

"The style (of his *History*) is as smooth as a Flemish picture. Mr. Gibbon's characteristics are good

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—"Alciphron," in the *Public Advertiser*, August 22, 1771.

"I weigh every word; and every alteration is, in my eyes at least, a blemish." Junius to H. S. Woodfall, December 10, 1771.

"Junius was by far the most remarkable public writer of his time. He was clear, terse, and logical in statement, learned, ingenious, and subtle in disputation, eloquent in appeals to popular passion, polished and trenchant as steel in sarcasm, terrible in invective." — *Constitutional History of England*, by Sir T. E. May, vol. ii. pp. 251 and 252.

"The periods of Junius are of the most artificial construction, and polished with the greatest labour." — *History of England during the Reign of George the Third*, by the Right Hon. W. Massey, vol. i. p. 286.

"He abounds in happy terms of expression, sentences pointed with skill, ingenious disposition of

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sense, and a polished art." Horace Walpole to Mason, February 18, 1776.

"He ably wove together an extreme variety of subjects, and rendered them in a studied and elaborate style, the elegance of which occasionally touched upon the ornamental." — Sainte-Beuve, *ut supra*.

"His style was emphatic and expressive; his sentences luminous."—Porson.

"He is seated in his arm-chair, while he is writing, and he leaves you there as you read him, or if he gets up, it is only to walk two or three times round the room, while he arranges his phrase and makes up his mind how he shall express it."—Sainte-Beuve, *ut supra*.

"The style of Gibbon deserves the higher praise of animation, which keeps the attention constantly

character which have impressed themselves upon that correspondence, and often very disagreeably so? They were not the work of any one of "that mob of gentlemen who wrote with ease," upon whose hypothetical claims to the authorship of the *Letters* so many ingenious treatises have been written. They were the productions of a man who had trained himself for the profession of letters by years of patient study and application, by devouring and assimilating multitudes of books, by storing his mind with all that could be learned from the best writers of classic antiquity, and by acquiring, in addition — what was then extremely rare — a thorough knowledge of the French language and literature. As a controversialist he had forged and filed, with his own hands, every one of the weapons contained in his armoury; had examined all the uses for which they could be most effectively employed, and handled them with the ability and ease of a practised master of fence. Where he felt that he needed instruction he had recourse to the most famous of experts; for almost every year, as Gibbon has told us, he perused afresh those *Provincial Letters* of Pascal, which eight generations of readers have concurred in recognising as masterpieces of incisive irony, mordant sarcasm, righteous indignation,

and eloquent raillery. Gibbon, wearing the mask of Junius, was so subtle in his methods of preserving his anonymity that any allusion in his public and private correspondence to the gladiator was deliberately designed to divert suspicion from the real writer, and to put inquisitive people upon a false scent. Once only does he allow an unguarded expression to escape from his pen, and this is to be found in the private letter to Wilkes I have already referred to, in which Junius speaks of his "figure" as one which was calculated to do but little credit to his partner in a ball-room. It certainly was not. Walpole animadverts upon his "ridiculous face and person," his "round features," and his "button-hole mouth," which George Colman also described as "a round hole nearly in the centre of his visage." Gibbon was five feet two inches in height, and so corpulent that he might be spoken of as a roly-poly man, in whom a constitutional tendency to obesity had been encouraged by the sedentary habits of a student, and by a natural and pampered disinclination to take any active exercise. His face was fat, and his deep double chin certainly had the effect of throwing his droll little mouth into an almost central position in his countenance, as Colman has said, so that his grotesque appearance would

have attracted no little attention at a ball in the Mansion House or the Guildhall, especially as the partner of a young lady, daughter to a man so notorious as John Wilkes had become. But apart from so plausible an excuse for declining the invitation, Gibbon was far too shrewd and wary to throw off his disguise, as he must have done under these circumstances.

CHAPTER VIII

JUNIUS' SOURCES OF INFORMATION

MR. WADE, in his *History and Discovery of Junius*, proves pretty conclusively that he was neither a peer nor a member of the House of Commons, while dwelling at some length upon the knowledge of the great world which is displayed by Junius. "Whatever might have been his talents, the spirit of his language, the originality of his ideas, or the patriotism of his purpose, he evidently felt," observes this writer, "that to exhibit a perfect and constant acquaintance with political and court life was absolutely essential to gain the public ear. In this object he completely succeeded, displaying such a mastery of facts, such an immediate knowledge of state secrets, and such superiority of style and tone, that he was always presumed to speak from a high position in society." And then, having occasion to mention the Cocoa Tree, Mr. Wade lays his hand for a single instant upon the clue which, if followed up, would have enabled him "to pluck out the heart of the mystery," but immediately puts it down again in order to chase an *ignis fatuus*. For he quotes from Gibbon's

Journal of November 24, 1762, the following striking entry: "That respectable body of which I have the honour of being a member affords every evening a sight truly English. Twenty or thirty, perhaps, of the first men in the kingdom, in point of fashion and fortune, supping off little tables covered with a napkin, in the middle of a coffee-room, upon a bit of cold meat or a sandwich, and drinking a glass of punch. At present we are full of king's counsellors and lords of the bedchamber, who, having jumped into the Ministry, make a very singular medley of their old principles and language with their modern ones." Observing the readiness with which some of these eminent statesmen turned their coats, Gibbon probably felt all the less compunction in turning his own, ten or eleven years afterwards, as we shall find that he did later on. Previously, however, to his becoming a frequenter of the Cocoa Tree, he had enjoyed many opportunities of mixing with the "best people" in England. His intimacy with the Mallets led to his introduction to Lady Hervey; of whom he writes as follows: "Her age and infirmities confined her at home; her dinners were select; in the evening her house was open to the best company of both sexes and all nations." This was that Lady Hervey who, as Mary Lepel, maid

of honour to Queen Caroline when Princess of Wales, had been one of the principal ornaments of her court, and married John, Lord Hervey, Lord Privy Seal, and author of the well-known *Memoirs of the Reign of George the Second.*

In Paris, in the year following that in which Gibbon speaks of the " set " to which he belonged at the Cocoa Tree, he found himself a welcome guest in the most exclusive salons, thanks to the letters of introduction with which he had been furnished by the Duc de Nivernois, the French ambassador in London, by Lady Hervey, and by Horace Walpole, and thanks also to his perfect knowledge of the French language. In that city he made the acquaintance of D'Alembert, Diderot, and the most prominent authors and artists of the day; dined four times a week at the tables of Mesdames Geoffrin and du Bocage; visited the Duchesse d'Aiguillon; supped with the Marquis de Mirabeau; and held many conversations with Helvetius, the Baron d'Holbach, the Comte de Caylus, Suard, Barthélemy, Reynal, and many other celebrities.

In 1765, on his return from Switzerland, Gibbon and some other men who had travelled, like himself, founded the Roman Club in London, and the list of its members will serve to show through how many channels political informa-

tion and personal gossip affecting the conduct and character of public men would be likely to filter into the capacious mind and retentive memory of Gibbon, to be reproduced in the *Letters of Junius* four years later. The members he enumerates are these: Lord Mountstuart, afterwards Marquis of Bute, one of the Auditors of the Imprests, and successively ambassador to Turin and Madrid; Colonel Edmonstone; Weddal (Weddel?); Palgrave, the friend of Gray, Mason, and Walpole; Lord Berkeley; Godfrey Clarke; Lord Sheffield, Gibbon's attached friend, correspondent, and literary executor; Major Ridley; Sir William Guise; Sir John Aubrey; Lord Abingdon, who ventured to enter the lists as a pamphleteer against Burke; the Hon. Peregrine Bertie, of the ducal family of Ancaster; Cleaver; the Hons. John and George Damer, sons of Lord Milton, the latter succeeding to the title; Sir Thomas Gascoigne, and Sir John Hort. In latter years Gibbon was elected a member of the Literary Club, and such was his position in society that he was admitted to membership at White's, Almack's, Brook's, and Boodles', and "before I left England in 1783," he writes, "there were few persons of any eminence in the literary or political world to whom I was a stranger."

NOTE

There is one other, and a very striking, point of resemblance between the literary style of Gibbon and that of Junius. Each was in the habit of concluding a passage with a skilfully balanced period, in which epigrammatic point, antithesis, and brevity were aimed at: as, for example, in the following instances:—

"He was neither an object of derision to his enemies, nor of melancholy pity to his friends."—JUNIUS, *Letter* 1.

"He never lost the confidence of his friends, nor the esteem of his enemies."—GIBBON, *History*, chap. xxi. § 3.

"A measure so remarkably daring that it excites all our attention and engrosses all our resentment."—JUNIUS, *Letter* 2.

"The incomprehensible mystery which excites our adoration and eludes our inquiry."—GIBBON, *History*, chap. xxi. § 2.

"The same pretended power which robs an English subject of his birthright may rob an English King of his Crown."—JUNIUS, *Address to the King*.

"The introduction of luxury, after destroying the freedom of the people, has undermined the foundations of the throne."—GIBBON, *History*, chap. xxvii.

"He determined to quit a Court whose proceedings and decisions he could neither assent to with honour, nor oppose with success."—JUNIUS, *Letter* 41.

"Julian expressed his intention of resigning the purple which he could not preserve with honour, but which he could not abdicate with safety."—GIBBON, *History*, chap. xxii.

SOME EXAMPLES OF THE STRUCTURE OF JUNIUS' SENTENCES

"If a resolution must at best be taken, there is no one so likely to be supported with firmness, as that which has been adopted with moderation."—*Letter* 1.

"A people who . . . supporting their claims by argument are insulted by declamation."—*Ibid.*

"A character which will only pass without censure when it passes without observation."—*Letter* 7.

"A measure so singularly daring that it excites all our attention and engrosses all our resentment."—*Letter* 2.

"A creature . . . too strong to be commanded and too formidable to be removed."—*Letter* 12.

"As you have lived without virtue, you should die without repentance."—*Letter* 23.

"The coldest bodies warm with opposition, and the hardest sparkle in collision."—*Address to the King.*

"Nature intended that man only for a good-humoured fool. A systematic education, with long practice, made him a consummate hypocrite."—*Letter* 52.

"A fawning treachery against which no prudence conquered, no courage can defend."—*Address to the King.*

"They equally detest the pageantry of a king and the supercilious hypocrisy of a bishop."—*Address to the King.*

"You would not be the first prince of their native country, against whom they (*i.e.*, the Scotch) have rebelled nor the first whom they have betrayed."—*Ibid.*

"Remember that as it was acquired by one revolution, it may be lost by another."—*Ibid.*

"Injuries may be atoned for and forgiven, but insults admit of no compensation."—*Letter* 36.

"You began with betraying the people—you conclude with betraying the King."—*Ibid.*

"A Ministry and a Parliament who are neither to be persuaded by argument nor instructed by experience."—*Letter* 39.

"He can neither open his heart to new connections, nor his mind to better information."—*Ibid.*

"Violence and treachery at home can only be supported by treachery and submission abroad."—*Letter* 42.

"To depart in the minutest degree from the nicety and strictness of punctilio, is as dangerous to national honour as to female virtue."—*Ibid.*

"Private credit is wealth: public honour is security."—*Ibid.*

"There are proselytes from atheism but none from superstition."—*Letter* 44.

Some Examples of the Structure of Gibbon's Sentences

"Instead of the alliance between Church and State, we can discover only the ancient alliance between the avarice of the priest and the credulity of the people."—*Works*, vol. iv. p. 473.

"A behaviour which in Augustus was decent would have covered Æneas with infamy."—*Ibid.*, p. 493.

"The end of philosophy is truth: the end of poetry is pleasure."—*Ibid.*, p. 498.

"The sting of a wasp may continue to fester and inflame, long after the vexatious little insect has left its venom and its life in the wound."—*Ibid.*, p. 521.

"As the former sunk to the lowest degree of credulity, which was compatible with learning, the latter rose to the highest pitch of scepticism in any wise consistent with religion."—*Ibid.*, p. 588.

"The hypocrite who aspires to the reputation of a saint, often finds it convenient to affect the language of a penitent."—*Ibid.*, p. 636.

"Concealing behind a mask the vexation of disappointment, and the guilty blush of detection."—*Ibid.*, p. 644.

"Posterity will condemn the ingratitude, instead of praising the clemency, of the emperor."—*History*, chap. xxiii.

" Athanasius had reason to hope that he would be allowed either the merit of a successful prediction, or the excuse of a grateful though ineffectual prayer."—*History*, chap. xxv.

" The use of the dagger is seldom adopted in public councils, so long as they retain any confidence in the power of the sword."—*Ibid.*

" If the exercise of justice is the most important duty, the indulgence of mercy is the most exquisite pleasure of a sovereign."—*Ibid.*, chap. xxvii.

" The subjects of Rome . . . beheld with equal abhorrence the rebels who opposed and the ministers who abused the authority of the throne."—*Ibid.*, chap. xxix.

" They had imbibed the vices, without imitating the arts and institutions of civilised society."—*Ibid.*, chap. xxxi.

" His extravagant vices would have inspired contempt if they had not excited fear and abhorrence."—*Ibid.*, chap. xxxvi.

" While they affected the language, they imperceptibly imbibed the spirit of genuine Christianity."—*Ibid.*, chap. xxxvii.

" The disorders of the moral are sometimes corrected by those of the physical world, and an acrimonious humour, falling on a single fibre of one man, may prevent or suspend the misery of nations."—*Ibid.*, chap. lxiv.

" The modest inscription, instead of accusing the rashness, recorded the valour and bewailed the misfortune of the Hungarian youth."—*Ibid.*, chap. lxvii.

"They were separated by the jealousy of vice, and at length reconciled by the partnership of guilt."—*History*, chap. xli.

"Nor would the enemies of peace and order who insulted the vicar of Christ have long respected the unarmed sanctity of a plebeian magistrate."—*Ibid.*, chap. lxix.

"A philosophic smile will not disturb the triumph of the priest or the happiness of the people."—*Ibid.*

CHAPTER IX

JUNIUS' VIEWS OF RELIGION

In Dr. Good's *Preliminary Essay*, he mentions that Junius was accused of Deism and atheism, and it is a curious coincidence that precisely similar charges were brought against Gibbon after the publication of the famous fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of his *Decline and Fall*. Heron, in his edition of the *Letters*, considers that "Junius' allusions to religion, so far as they are contemptuous, relate chiefly to the absurdities of the Roman Catholic religion; a fact from which we may fairly infer either that the course of his education or the incidents of his life led him into a particular acquaintance with these, and an indignant disgust against them; or else that he, in this instance, merely echoed the morals of Pascal and Chillingworth." The shrewdness of the inference is quite remarkable if it be admitted that Gibbon is identical with Junius. At the age of sixteen, the youthful student "bewildered himself," to use his own words, "in the errors of the Church of Rome,"

and he thus acquired "a particular acquaintance" with the doctrines of that religion. On arriving at years of discretion, his opinions and feelings gradually changed[1] with respect to "the Catholic superstition," as he termed it; and his sentiments of repulsion towards it were doubtless intensified by his study of the two authors specified by Heron. One of these, with Chillingworth, whom Gibbon praises for his "acute and manly understanding," he shows himself to be perfectly familiar, at pages 89 and 90 of his *Autobiographies* (Mr. John Murray's edition), and, as has been already pointed out, Gibbon read the *Provincial Letters* of the other, Pascal, almost every year. But apart from his study of the writings of the ex-Jesuit and of the French Jansenist, the historian, while accumulating the materials for his great work, must have found continual proofs of that "ancient alliance between the avarice of the priests and the credulity of the people," which he refers to in his controversial pamphlet; while his robust good sense, fortified by observation and reflection, and his intercourse with the freethinkers of Paris, would combine to alienate him more and more

[1] "It is probable that his relinquishing of dogmatic faith was gradual and for a time unconscious."—*Gibbon*, by Mr. J. C. Morison, in the English Men of Letters series.

widely from the faith he had thoughtlessly adopted in his raw youth, and to bring about an entire revulsion of feeling against the delusions to which he had too readily surrendered himself in his " green and sallet days."

CHAPTER X

JUNIUS' PREJUDICES

JUNIUS entertained two strong prejudices, as may be learned from his letter to Wilkes (No. 70) in which, after touching upon the fact that the laws of England attach greater importance to the possession of property for a certain length of time than to any other title whatsoever, he goes on to remark: "Though I use the terms of art, do not injure me so much as to suspect I am a lawyer.[1] I had as lief be a Scotchman." I have

[1] May not Gibbon's antipathy to lawyers have infused additional acrimony into the language which he employs when describing the character and conduct of the legal profession in Rome in the early part of the fourth century. He speaks of that profession as having become "a sordid and pernicious trade," pursued by men who were, for the most part, "ignorant and rapacious guides, who conducted their clients through a maze of expense, of delay, and of disappointment; from whence, after a tedious series of years, they were at length dismissed, when their patience and fortune were almost exhausted." — *The Decline and Fall*, chapter xxii. section 2. And the historian does not omit to remind us in a footnote to chapter xxxiv. that "the Germans who exterminated Varus and his legions had been particularly offended with the Roman laws and lawyers." Then he adds, with a sidelong glance, perhaps, at "old Southhouse," and at "that villain Bricknall": "One of the barbarians, after the effectual precautions of cutting out the tongue of an advocate and sewing up his mouth, observed with much satisfaction that the viper could no longer hiss."

not succeeded in obtaining any evidence of Gibbon's acquiescence in the antipathy to North Britons which was so widely prevalent in England at this time, and of which Johnson was a typical representative; but the historian's aversion to lawyers makes itself apparent in his letter to Lord Sheffield, dated from Lausanne, August, 1779, in which, speaking of an investment his noble friend is endeavouring to make for him at home, the writer says: "If he will not take £3000 at four per cent. we must look out elsewhere; new doubts and delays will arise, and I am persuaded that you will not place an implicit confidence in any attorney." And a little further on he recurs to the same subject, and inquires: "Once more, what is the difficulty of the title? Will men of sense in a sensible country never get rid of the tyranny of lawyers? more oppressive and ridiculous than even the old yoke of the clergy." And in the letter to Wilkes above quoted from, Junius says: "It is the encouragement given to *disputes about titles* which has supported that iniquitous profession (of the law) at the expense of the community." What could have induced Junius to write so strongly on the subject of the legal profession? And what special experience had he had in connection with "disputes about titles" to cause him to

indulge in this diatribe at that particular moment?

The *Private Letters of Edward Gibbon*, recently published by Mr. John Murray, supply a complete answer to the question. From the month of January, 1771, until the year 1776, Gibbon was continually harassed by the difficulties and delays interposed by the lawyers to his obtaining a clear *title* to one of his father's estates, which he wished to sell. In his letters to his stepmother and other correspondents he speaks of one of the lawyers engaged in the business as "an old fox," and says of another, "what a villain that Bricknall is!" "The snail of Aldermanbury" is an epithet which he also applies to the "d——d Lovegrove," because, as his exasperated client tells us, "he still shuffles." "The cold, slow-paced forms of the law," and its inexhaustible resources whenever "quibbles" have to be raised, and bills of costs extenuated, proved too much even for the phlegmatic temperament of Gibbon, who writes, "the cursed business almost distracts me," and he exclaims, "it is indeed a d——d affair." He had, therefore, the best of all reasons for asserting that "it is the encouragement given to disputes about titles which has supported that iniquitous profession at the expense of the community." Without attaching

too much importance to this coincidence, it is certainly deserving of mention, because, as Iago says:

> It may help to thicken other proofs
> That do demonstrate thinly.

And while upon the subject of coincidences I would call attention to another, namely, the identity of the views which were held by Junius and Gibbon as to the importance of an *independent income*. In one of his letters to Woodfall (No. 59), Junius writes: "Let all your views in life be directed to a solid, however moderate, independence. Without it, no man can be happy or even honest."

In that portion of his *Memoirs* which relates to the years 1770-72, being the same period of his life in which the correspondence of Junius with Woodfall was taking place, Gibbon writes as follows: "The gratification of my desires (they were not immoderate) has been seldom disappointed by the want of money or credit; my pride was never insulted by the visit of an importunate tradesman, and my transient anxiety for the past or future has been dispelled by the studious or social occupation of the present hour. My conscience does not accuse me of any act of extravagance or injustice, and the remnant of my estate affords an ample and honourable pro-

vision for my declining age. . . . I may believe and even assert that, in circumstances more indigent or more wealthy, I should never have accomplished or acquired the fame of an historian; that my spirit would have been broken by poverty and contempt, and that my industry might have been relaxed in the labour and luxury of a superfluous fortune. I had now attained *the first of earthly blessings—independence.*"

It may be remembered that Junius repeatedly assured Woodfall that his anonymous correspondent was in no want of money; that he was quite prepared to bear him harmless in the event of legal proceedings being instituted against him, and that when the publisher offered him (Junius) half the profits of a collective edition of the *Letters*, the writer of them declined the "handsome" offer, remarking, "be assured that I am far above all pecuniary views." Junius, however, expressed a wish to have "a set bound in vellum, gilt and lettered '*Junius* 1. 2.' as handsomely as you can—the edges gilt." These volumes, although directed by Woodfall "to be finished in the most elegant manner possible," did not come up to his expectations, and they were not sent to their author until March 7, 1773. Then arises the question, what afterwards became

of them? Is it not passing strange that they have never found their way, so far as is known, into any public or private library, or into the catalogue of any second-hand bookseller in Great Britain?

One of the correspondents of the *Athenæum*, Mr. Haggard, stated that "from the time he read the private correspondence between Junius and Woodfall, he examined all book catalogues that came in his way in the hope of finding a copy, or the copy "bound in vellum," and that these identical volumes turned up at the Stowe sale. But Mr. Dilke disposes of this delusion by the matter-of-fact statement that "the Stowe copy was printed on, but not bound in, vellum, and was not the edition of 1772—not a Woodfall edition at all—but the common illustrated edition printed more than thirty years after by Bensley for Vernon and Hood." Let the book-hunter turn his attention to the libraries and book shops of Lausanne and Geneva, and if the two vellum-bound volumes are still in existence, he may be rewarded for his search by alighting upon a precious *trouvaille*.

CHAPTER XI

WHY JUNIUS BROKE HIS WORD

Mr. J. C. Morison mentions, as a noteworthy fact, that the five years which intervened between Gibbon's return from his travels and his father's death, were "the years during which his biographer is able to follow him with the least certainty. Hardly any of his letters which refer to that period have been preserved, and he has glided rapidly over it in his *Memoirs*." Now, two of these years were precisely those of Junius' greatest literary activity; for, between January 21, 1769, and August 22, 1770, he wrote no less than forty of the sixty-nine letters which he acknowledged to be his; while seventy-six out of the hundred and thirteen other letters which have been attributed to his pen were published during the same interval of time. Assuming that Gibbon was Junius, may we not find, in his anonymous occupation, an adequate and satisfactory explanation of the difficulty experienced by his biographer in following the movements of Gibbon at this particular period of his life; as also of the comparative silence of his *Memoirs*

concerning it? There were, as will presently be seen, the best of all reasons for such reticence.

In one of his private letters to Woodfall, Junius writes: "Act honourably by me, and at a proper time you shall know me." Why was this promise never fulfilled?[1] A reply to this query must be sought for, I think, in certain incidents in the career of Gibbon, shortly after the cessation of the *Letters of Junius* to the *Public Advertiser*. The last of these, in so far as they are capable of authentication, appeared on January 21, 1772. Before the end of 1774, Gibbon had received and had accepted from Lord Eliot the offer of a seat in the House of

[1] It is somewhat remarkable that Mr. N. W. Wraxall, in his well-known *Historical Memoirs of my own Time* (1772 to 1784), when discussing the question, "Who was Junius?" should have hit upon the very reason which restrained Gibbon from owning himself as the writer of the *Letters*, after having promised Woodfall that he would disclose his identity to him in due time. Wraxall writes (see page 281 of the *Dryden House Memoirs*):—"Should he (Junius) have left no descendants, it is possible that he might dislike the comparison between his actions and his writings, which must have been made by mankind. If, for instance, it would have been proved that he *accepted office*, a pension, or a peerage, *from the sovereign and the ministers whom he had recently accused as enemies of their country*, or as having betrayed its interests, would not the moral evasion or contempt excited towards his memory by such a disclosure have overbalanced the meed of literary fame obtained from the labours of his pen?" But, in Gibbon's case, he had also to safeguard the reputation acquired by the first volume of his *Decline and Fall*, published four years after the discontinuance of the *Letters of Junius*."

Commons for the rotten borough of Liskeard, in Cornwall. Not only so, but when he entered that House he became and continued to be a supporter of the policy of Lord North, the very statesman against whom "the great boar of the forest" had so often whetted his tusks. Now, if Gibbon and Junius were one and the same person, what is the explanation of this somewhat sudden change of front? Why did the assailant of Lord North afterwards become his partisan, in the first instance, and his admirer afterwards?

In the first place, Gibbon was a man of strong personal antipathies and aversions, who "*had really no opinions in politics*," as Mr. Morison justly remarks, and if the incident related by Walpole, in the manuscript note which is quoted by Earl Russell in his *Life of Charles James Fox*, be true, there is nothing surprising in the tergiversation of Junius, always assuming him to be identical with Gibbon. Walpole's memorandum is as follows: "1781, June 20. Sold by auction the library of Charles Fox, which had been taken in execution. Amongst the books were (*sic*) Mr. Gibbon's first volume of *Roman History*, which appeared, by the title page, to have been given by the author to Mr. Fox, who had written in it the following anecdote: 'The author at Brookes' said there was no salvation

for the country till six heads of the principal persons in the administration were laid on the table; eleven days after, this same gentleman accepted the place of lord of trade under those ministers and has acted with them ever since!' " The book, it is added, sold for three guineas.

On the same day, when writing to the Countess of Ossory (No. 2405 of his correspondence), Walpole says: " I tremble lest Mr. Fox should write a note to record my fall, in my *Royal Authors*, where my Whiggism is the most apparent." There is another intimation of the opinion entertained of Gibbon's time-serving propensities by the little cynic of Strawberry Hill—who knew the historian intimately—in a letter written by Walpole to the Rev. William Mason, on the 1st of April previously (No. 2021). It is as follows: " If you will not read the Constantinopolitan Historian, you will at least not disdain to turn to a particular passage or two; look at page 46 of vol. ii., on the reduction of the legions, beginning at the words, ' The same timid policy.' Lord John (Hervey) says he is persuaded that Gibbon had thrown in that and such sentences when he was paying court to Charles Fox, and forgot to correct them after his change."

Mr. Morison speaks of the doubts which were raised, when Gibbon accepted office, as to his

"complete straightforwardness and honourable adhesion to party ties" in so doing, and remarks that "his own letter to Edward Eliot, accepting the place, betrays a somewhat uneasy conscience." This letter contains such a frank confession of the writer's motives on this important occasion that it deserves to be given *in extenso*:

"*July* 22, 1779.

"DEAR SIR,—Yesterday I received a very interesting communication from my friend, whose kind and honourable behaviour towards me I must always remember with the highest gratitude. He informed me that, in consequence of an arrangement, a place at the Board of Trade was reserved for me, and that, as soon as I signified my acceptance of it, he was satisfied that no further difficulties would arise. My answer to him was sincere and explicit. I told him that I was far from approving all the past measures of the administration, even some of those in which I myself had silently concurred; that I saw, with the rest of the world many capital defects in the characters of some of the present ministers, and was sorry that in so alarming a situation of public affairs the country had not the assistance of several able and honest men who are now in opposition. But that I had not formed with any

of those persons now in opposition any engagements or connections which could in the least restrain or affect my parliamentary conduct; that I could not discover among them such superior advantages, either of measures or of abilities as could make me consider it as a duty to attach myself to their cause; that I clearly understood, from the public and private language of ——, one of their leaders, that, in the actual state of the country, he himself was seriously of opinion that opposition could not tend to any good purpose, and might be productive of much mischief; that for those reasons I saw no objections which could prevent me from accepting an office under the present government, and that I was ready to take a step which I found to be consistent both with my interest and my honour.

"It must now be decided whether I may continue to live in England, or whether I must soon withdraw myself into a kind of philosophical exile in Switzerland. My father left his affairs in a state of embarrassment and even of distress. My attempts to dispose of a part of my landed property have hitherto been disappointed, and are not likely at present to be more successful; and my plan of expense, though moderate in itself, deserves the name of extravagance, since it exceeds my real income. The addition of the

salary which is now offered will make my situation perfectly easy; but I hope you will do me the justice to believe that my mind could not be so unless I were satisfied of the rectitude of my own conduct."

Qui s'excuse s'accuse. The whole letter strikes one as an elaborate apology from Junius without the mask to Junius with his visor down for having accepted place and pay from the hands of the men he had so roughly handled ten years before. And the motive for that acceptance is clearly set forth by Gibbon in his *Memoirs*, where he writes that, by his appointment, his "private income was enlarged by a clear addition of between £700 and £800 a year," thus securing, for a time at least, that "independence" upon which Junius and Gibbon concur in laying so much stress.

What had occurred between the discontinuance of the publication of the *Letters of Junius* and the appointment of Gibbon as one of the lords commissioners of trade and plantations? He had entered the House of Commons; he had been brought into close and familiar intercourse with some of the public men he had formerly flagellated; he had found them to be by no means the moral and political monsters upon

whom he had previously emptied the vials of his vituperation; his mind had been sobered, disciplined, and matured by the progress of time, by his historical studies, by his philosophical reflections, and by the dignity and responsibilities of his new position, and above all, he had achieved the one great object of his ambition—an assured competence. There was, therefore, as much difference between the Junius of 1769-71 and the Edward Gibbon of 1779 as between the Theodore de Beza who wrote the somewhat erotic *Poemata Juvenilia* and the biographer of Calvin and translator of the New Testament; as between the Robert Southey of *Wat Tyler* and the copious contributor to the *Quarterly Review;* or as between the Benjamin D'Israeli who wrote the *Revolutionary Epic*, and the statesman who became the leader of the great historical party of the Tories in Great Britain. But if, as I have endeavoured to show, the same man who "thundered forth his terrible philippics" against Lord North afterwards became a place-man in his administration, that fact alone constituted the strongest possible reason for his maintaining inviolate the secret of their authorship, and for his never fulfilling the promise of its disclosure which he had once made to Woodfall. At the same time, Gibbon's private opinion of him, after

the fall of the North administration and his own loss of office, in 1782, was just as contemptuous as that of Junius had been in 1770; for writing to Lord Sheffield on December 20, 1783, Gibbon says: "If I did not compare it with the rest of his character, I should be astonished that Lord North suffered me to depart without even a civil answer to my letter. Were I capable of hating a man, whom it is not easy to hate, I should find myself most amply revenged by the insignificance of the creature in this mighty revolution of India, his own peculiar department." In one of the letters of "Atticus" attributed to Junius will be found the following curious reference to the "insignificance" of Lord North: "If he were of any consequence, we might lament that an honest man should find it necessary to disgrace himself in a post he is utterly unfit for" (vol. ii. p. 246, Bohn's edition).

That the earlier political leanings of Gibbon were much more liberal than his later ones is shown by a remark of Walpole's in a letter to Mason, written in May, 1780 (No. 1915), wherein he makes mention of the recent publication of "three new *Epistles on History*, addressed to Mr. Gibbon by Mr. Hayley." Walpole proceeds to remark: "Mr. Gibbon, I doubt, will not be quite pleased, for as the *Epistles* have certainly cost

the author some pains, they were probably commenced before the historian's *conversion to the court*, and are a little too fond of liberty to charm the ear of a convert, which, too, the author wants to make him in another sense, and that will not please, unless he has swallowed his majesty's professions as well as his pay."

Once only does Gibbon allude in his correspondence to these famous *Letters*, which were the theme of universal conversation and comment at the time; and this was not until eleven months after the last of them had made its appearance in the *Public Advertiser*. In a letter to Mr. Holroyd, dated some time in the month of December, 1772, which must surely be an error when taken in connection with the words we have italicised, Gibbon says: "What are the trees and waters of Sheffield Place compared with the comfortable smoke, lazy dinners, and inflammatory Juniuses *which we can every day enjoy in town?* You have seen *the last of Junius?* He calls to the distant legions to march to the Capitol and free us from the tyranny of the Prætorian Guards. I cannot answer for the ghost of the *hic et ubique*, but the Hampshire militia are determined to keep the peace for fear of a broken head."

There is not much to be made out of this passage, either for or against the Gibbon-Junius hypothesis; but it may be safely said that, if Gibbon were Junius, it would have been quite consistent with his policy of secrecy to indulge in a little sarcastic pleasantry at the expense of his own "inflammatory" productions in order that not the slightest breath of suspicion of their authorship might attach itself to him.

There is only one other very trifling matter which I hope I may be excused for touching upon, and it is that both Junius and Gibbon had a liking for wine. In his seventieth letter, addressed to Wilkes, the former says: "I too am no enemy to good fellowship, and have often cursed that canting parson (Horne) for wishing to deny you your claret. It is for him, and for men like him, to beware of intoxication. Though I do not place the little pleasures of life in competition with the glorious business of instructing and directing the people, yet I see no reason why a wise man may not unite the public virtues of Cato with the indulgence of Epicurus."

In the case of Gibbon, "the indulgence of Epicurus" took the form of good old Madeira, which probably shortened his life. Not that he was an intemperate man, but with his plethoric habit, his settled aversion to exercise, and his

general love of good cheer, those butts of Madeira which were consigned to him at Lausanne through Messrs. Romberg, of Ostend, to say nothing of the hogsheads of claret from Bordeaux, which used to reach him by way of Marseilles and the Rhone, must have been "perilous stuff" to a man of his temperament, his immobility of person, and his gouty diathesis.

RECAPITULATION

1. There was a cessation of letters from Junius to the *Public Advertiser*, whether authentic or otherwise, and of private letters from Junius to the publisher of that paper, during a great part of the year 1770, while the father of Edward Gibbon was afflicted with an illness which terminated fatally. After his death, the composition and publication of these letters were resumed.

2. Junius exhibited a particular knowledge of military affairs such as was possessed by no English writer of the times, with the single exception of Gibbon.

3. The kindly feeling for John Wilkes personally entertained by Junius is explicable, on my hypothesis, by the old boon companionship between Gibbon and the popular tribune, formed when they were brother officers in the militia.

4. Junius' fears with respect to Garrick were perfectly natural if Gibbon was Junius.

5. Gibbon was the only man of letters in England capable of writing the *Letters of Junius* who was, at the same time, gifted with the mastery of the French language which is credited to the latter.

6. The classical and general attainments of Junius, as revealed in his writings, were those for which Gibbon was distinguished in a pre-eminent degree.

7. There is a quite remarkable resemblance between the literary style of Junius and that of Gibbon. Each exhibits the same polish, laboured ease, symmetrical structure, and fastidious workmanship. Each writer was fond of epigram and antithesis, and both were masters of the formidable weapons of sarcasm and irony.

8. Before the *Letters of Junius* were written, Gibbon had proved himself to be irresistible in controversy, and exceedingly proud and acrimonious.

9. Gibbon's social position, and his membership of the best clubs in London, gave him access to the very sources of information, the command of which by Junius occasioned so much astonishment in political circles, and led to such highly amusing conjectures and speculations as to his personality.

10. The unconcealed dislike and scorn exhibited by Junius towards Roman Catholicism may be easily explained by Gibbon's early conversion to, and subsequent revulsion from, that religion.

11. After Gibbon's acceptance of office at

the hands of Lord North, his reasons for maintaining an unbroken silence with respect to the authorship of the *Letters of Junius*—assuming that he was the writer of them—would be more imperative and absolute than ever.

Among the minor points of resemblance between Gibbon and Junius may be mentioned the care which each bestowed upon the punctuation of his letters.

dence,' and from other parts of it, we learn that the letters were usually sent by a common porter. Dr. Good, not being able to reconcile these contradictions, supposes there was a narrow circle to whom Junius unbosomed himself. But, may not all these apparent contradictions and discrepancies be accounted for by concluding that this ' narrow circle ' was confined to a single confidant, who acted occasionally as Junius' amanuensis and perhaps messenger? "

Here let me note, in conclusion, a curious expression which is to be found in one of the private letters of Junius to Woodfall. It is as follows: " I doubt much whether I shall ever have the pleasure of knowing you; but, if things take the turn I expect, *you shall know me by my works.*" May not this be a reference by Gibbon to his long meditated *Decline and Fall.* For mark this collocation of dates. The last letter of Junius bears date on January 21, 1772, and in February 1773, Gibbon writes in the Autobiography, known as *Memoir E.*, the following words: " No sooner was I settled in my house and library than I undertook the composition of the first volume of my history."

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